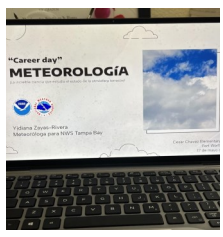
SUNCOAST OBSERVER

A quarterly newsletter brought to you by the National Weather Service Tampa Bay Area, FL

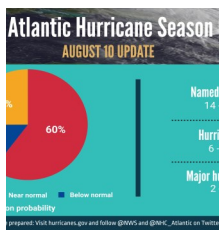
www.weather.gov/tampa 9.23.2023

Top stories in this newsletter

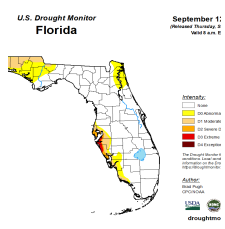
NWS Tampa Bay Meteorologists Shadow TPA Safety Operations



NWS Tampa Bay Helping to Shape Future Generations of Meteorologists



2023 Hurricane Season Outlook Mid-Season Update and Hurricane Idalia



West Central and Southwest Florida Coastline Drought Continues

NWS Tampa Bay Meteorologists Shadow Tampa International Airport Safety Operations

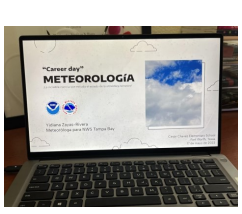
By: Ali Davis and Austen Flannery

Tampa International and WFO Tampa Bay have been working closely together for many years, with staff from the NWS frequently providing briefings to senior airport leadership on hazards from hurricanes, to severe weather, and even to frost. Per an agreement with the Hillsborough County Aviation Authority (HCAA), the organization that oversees the Tampa International Airport, the NWS issues Airport Weather Warnings for impactful weather, in addition to issuing 30-hour Terminal Aerodrome Forecasts (TAFs) to support the needs of the FAA and the National Airspace System (NAS) every three hours.

To improve Decision Support Services provided to the HCAA and the FAA, WFO Tampa Bay leveraged this long-standing relationship to provide forecasters with an opportunity to shadow different departments within the airport. In small groups, meteorologists started the day with the airfield operations team, and assisted in the daily airport inspection. This included a stop at the Automated Surface Observing System (ASOS), a survey of some of the most vulnerable spots for flooding, and some close-up views of aircraft arriving and departing the airport. From there, meteorologists met with airport fire fighters and toured the Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF) station. Finally, the group toured the joint Emergency/Aircraft Operations Center and shadowed the various desks responsible for 911 dispatch, train/tram operations, and monitoring/disseminating critical weather information to over one thousand contacts within the HCAA, the FAA, and airport tenants.

The goal of this shadow visit was to build meteorologists' situational awareness of how our aviation partners operate since weather plays a significant role in their day-to-day operations. Meteorologists had the opportunity to see up close and in real time how our aviation partners rely on our weather information to keep the airport operating safely, giving them more insight for future significant weather events. They discussed protocols and action plans with staff regarding lightning, airport weather warnings (AWWs) and hurricane preparedness. Forecasters have highlighted the value this experience has been in better understanding partner needs and thresholds. This translates to improved products and services to support the operations of the busiest airport on the West Coast of Florida. To date, nearly half the operational staff has been able to attend, with the other half scheduled to go in the near future.

NWS Tampa Bay Helping to Shape Future Generations of Meteorologists

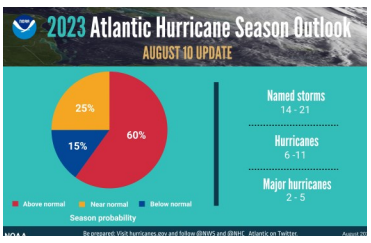


By: Yidiana Zayas-Rivera

Meteorologists have a great responsibility to analyze data, create forecasts, and most importantly, communicate the science to keep the public informed to save lives and properties. However, another awesome and fundamental part of our jobs is that we get to participate in outreach and education activities. It is such a good feeling to inspire future generations to love the weather and become future leaders in this field of science.

NWS Tampa Bay Meteorologist Yidiana Zayas-Rivera served as a Spanish guest speaker at a Virtual Career Day for elementary school students from Cesar Chávez Elementary School in Fort Worth, Texas. In that activity, professionals from different fields talked to the students about their jobs and careers. She talked about weather, what a meteorologist does, and various places where a meteorologist can work. The students were very curious and seemed to enjoy the talk while learning a lot. This specific talk was in Spanish, which was positive as it helps the NWS reach more communities and be inclusive. Throughout the year, we participate in similar activities, both in English or Spanish, so please do not hesitate to contact us and we will be happy to participate to continue shaping the future generation of meteorologists.

2023 Hurricane Season Outlook Mid-Season Update and Hurricane Idalia

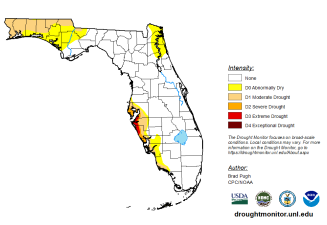


By: Jen Hubbard

The 2023 Hurricane Season has just passed the season peak (occurring on Sept. 10th), and we have already had 14 named storms and one unnamed storm. Back on August 10th, when at that point there had only been 4 named and one unnamed storm, the Climate Prediction Center, which is a part of the National Weather Service, updated the seasonal prediction and increased the outlook to an above normal season for the Atlantic. This increased the number of named storms to 14 to 21, 6 to 11 of those becoming a hurricane, and 2 to 5 of those a major hurricane (Category 3 or higher). The ongoing El Niño, warm phase of the Atlantic Multi-Decadal Oscillation, and record-warm Atlantic sea surface temperatures were cited as the main climate factors influencing the hurricane activity this year.

Hurricane Idalia, one of 3 hurricanes so far this season, made landfall near Keaton Beach in the Florida Big Bend at around 7:45AM EDT on Wednesday, August 30th. Idalia was a Category 3 major hurricane when it made landfall, with maximum sustained winds of 125mph. The storm lifted north across the western Gulf of Mexico prior to landfall, staying 100 to 150 miles offshore of the west coast of Florida up to about Spring Hill before it started to turn to the northeast. Despite remaining that far offshore, the rain shield of the storm and outer rainbands brought plenty of gusty and rainy conditions across the area, with 60 to 70 mph winds felt along the entire west central and southwest Florida coastline. Storm surge though was the greatest impact felt from this storm, with coastal areas seeing several hours of storm surge inundation as far south as Lee county. Extensive beach erosion was noted from Englewood to the Pinellas County beaches, with 5 foot cliffs noted at some beaches. Some of the worst storm surge measured within our local warning area occurred at Cedar Key, with 6.89 feet, and in Crystal River, with several readings of 6 to 7 feet measured. Further south, 3 to 5 feet of surge was measured from Tampa Bay and Clearwater Beach south to Venice. A story map will soon be available detailing this storm, so please check the Top News Headlines for its issuance. You can also see the observation details in the Post Tropical Cyclone Report for Idalia.

West Central and Southwest Florida Coastline Drought Continues



By: Jen Hubbard

Rainfall has been very uneven across the state this year, with a more dominate westerly wind flow pattern and very hot summertime Gulf water temperatures preventing stronger sea breeze convection from developing, leaving coastal areas of west central and southwest Florida with little rainfall through the normally wet summertime season. To highlight how dry the conditions are within the D3 (Extreme Drought) area shown in red on the map, here's a listing of the observation stations located within this area from January 1 – September 20.

NWS Ruskin (TBW): YTD Observed Rainfall, 21.56". Departure from Normal, -22.33", which is 49% of normal.

Sarasota-Bradenton Area (SRQ): YTD Observed Rainfall, 22.13". Departure from Normal, -18.48", which is 54% of normal.

Venice (VNCF1): YTD Observed Rainfall, 21.17". Departure from Normal, -20.93", which is 50% of normal.

In contrast, areas across the Nature Coast and interior counties have near to even slightly above normal rainfall totals, with several locations receiving over 40 inches of rainfall so far this year. To keep up to date with the drought conditions, please see our new experimental Drought Information Statement at weather.gov/tbw/DroughtInformationStatement, where you can also access the document and provide feedback on the new format.

National Weather Service Tampa Bay Area, FL
2525 14th Ave. SE, Ruskin, FL US 33570
(813) 645-2323